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Sermon Notes

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The Absentee Landowner Demands His Harvest

Matthew 21:33-46

From the very beginning, God created a world to bear fruit

Genesis 1:11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

The wondrous variety of fruit... papaya; mango; pineapple; succulent pears; tart, crisp apples; fuzzy brown kiwi fruit; on and on... a world of fruits, all of them born from seeds that God created at the beginning

So also, when God created man, male and female, in His image, this was the command He gave to them:

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth

Fruitfulness here meant having children... many children, who themselves would be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth with human beings, giving glory to God

The consistent teaching of Scripture: God has lavished on us everything we need for life and godliness... God had provided richly for us, and in return, God expects FRUIT... He expects a return on His investment... He demands an accounting from each and every human being for His investment in their lives

Many Scriptures testify to this issue of required FRUIT...

The issue comes clearly to the front with the coming of the Kingdom of God

- John the Baptist's Fiery Preaching

Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Matthew 3:10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- Jesus' statement:

Matthew 12:33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

- The Vine and the Branches

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

- Hebrews 6 and the apostates... after saying it is impossible for apostates to be renewed to repentance, speaks in this analogy:

Hebrews 6:7-8 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

- Many parables:
 - The Fruitless Fig Tree: “wait one more year and see if it bears fruit”
 - The Parable of the Seed and the Sower: same seed, various soils... bottom line, did it bear fruit?

Matthew 21 as a chapter teaches this truth with more force than almost any chapter in the Bible

I. The Context: Ancient and Immediate

A. Immediate Context; The Final Week of Jesus' Life on Earth

1. Passover: tens of thousands of Jews are flooding into Jerusalem
2. Triumphal Entry... Jesus rides a donkey to the praise and accolades of the people
3. Jesus also meets His enemies:
4. Consistent issue in Matthew 21: FRUITLESSNESS
 - a. Cursing of the Fig Tree
 - b. The Cleansing of the Temple
 - c. The Question About Authority
 - d. The Parable of the Two Sons
 - e. NOW the Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers

f. Summary: Christ has come to Judge His Fruitless Nation

B. Ancient Context: The Song of Isaiah

1. Isaiah 5: Isaiah the Prophet sings a song for His “loved one”... the Lord

Isaiah 5:1-6 I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ³ "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." Many similar elements: a fertile field, choicest vines, protective wall, winepress, watchtower

a. Same result: fruitlessness... and wickedness

Isaiah 5:7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

2. Christ is using Isaiah’s imagery... but He is also advancing it

- a. The central concept is the same: Israel was a nation privileged and blessed by God
- b. God had lavished spiritual advantages on it
- c. God expected a rich harvest of righteousness from it
- d. BUT Israel produced BAD FRUIT

II. The Parable Delivered: Main Idea and Details

Matthew 21:33-39 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵ "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸ "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his

inheritance.' ³⁹ *So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

A. Central Concept: Fruitlessness Produces Judgment

Because the tenant farmers refused to surrender to their master His rightful harvest, JUDGMENT is coming

B. Image: Israel a Vineyard with an “Absentee Landlord”

1. Landowner: literally “a man, a householder”
2. Planted a vineyard:
 - a. Frequently wealthy men would plant vineyards as an investment
 - b. This investment would be somewhat speculative... the outcome was by no means guaranteed
3. Every advantage given it
 - a. Wall: for protection, he built a wall around it, to keep out wild animals or human thieves
 - b. Winepress:
 - i) in anticipation of the harvest... generally would have been two basins cut out of rock, lined with white plaster; one lower than the other
 - ii) Servants would put the grapes in the upper one and tread them out with their feet
 - iii) The grape juice would flow into the lower basin, where it would begin the process of fermentation
 - c. Watchtower: to enable a watchman to keep a constant vigil, looking out over the surrounding terrain
4. Rented out to tenant vinegrowers
 - a. These would be skilled laborers, whose skill and diligence were essential to the success of the vineyard
 - b. If the tenants did their work well, they would share in the harvest and become wealthy thereby
 - c. This is the key concept... the vineyard BELONGS to the landowner... the tenant farmers are just working his vineyard in the hope of sharing its harvest

5. Went on a journey

- a. Another key to the parable... the owner is not visibly there moment by moment, controlling the venture
- b. The tenants are “on their own”... they do not see their master day by day
- c. They have to remember him by their minds, and be faithful to him in their hearts
- d. In the Luke version, Jesus says the master goes away “*for a long time*” (Luke 20:9)

C. Harvest Time

Matthew 21:34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

1. The owner could mark time as well as they... he would know when it was time to expect his harvest
2. As a new venture, the initial harvest would not have been very significant...
3. Generally, there would not be much yield from a vineyard until the fourth year, and no significant profit until the fifth
4. In any case, however, the wise landowner is going to send his servants at harvest time to RE-ESTABLISH HIS OWNERSHIP in the minds of the tenant farmers

D. Rebellion

Matthew 21:35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

1. Shocker: the tenants have decided to take control of the vineyard
2. They act in stunning violence to the official messengers of the owner... BEAT ONE, KILL ANOTHER, STONE a THIRD
3. The goal becomes clear in a moment,.. their desire is to run their lives themselves, to be accountable to no one, dependent on no one
4. Despite the fact that the landowner owns the vineyard and it was his money that paid for everything that went into the venture, they want it all themselves

E. Astonishing Patience by the Owner

1. The owner is portrayed as incredibly patient

2. He keeps sending messengers, despite the murderous way each of them are treated
3. Jesus tells us the owner sent “more than the first time”... he is trying everything he can do to reach these rebellious tenants and get his fruit
4. BUT every single messenger this man sends gets treated the same way

F. The Final Step: The Sending of the Son

Matthew 21:37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

1. Mark and Luke accounts add the word “beloved”; the verse here says what this patient landowner was thinking... “Surely they will respect my son”
2. BUT here the rebellion reaches its greatest pitch of wickedness

Matthew 21:38-39 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

3. The motive is this: the tenant farmers did not want the owner ruling over them; they did not want to give him anything; ultimately, they wanted full ownership of the vineyard themselves
4. When they see the son, they pounce on him, thinking to kill the “heir” and take his “inheritance”... the vineyard itself
5. Notice the detail: they “threw him out of the vineyard and kill him”... a clear prophecy of Jesus’ rejection by the leaders of Israel, of His crucifixion
OUTSIDE THE CITY GATES

G. “Judge for Yourselves”

1. Jesus then draws his hearers into the parable

Matthew 21:40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

2. Amazingly, the Lord did the exact same thing in Isaiah’s parable of the Vineyard

Isaiah 5:3-4 Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

In Isaiah, the Lord is saying “Judge for yourselves”

Here, Jesus is saying “Judge yourselves”

3. Jesus has skillfully laid a trap for His hearers... these were the chief priests and Pharisees, Jesus' enemies
4. No doubt they were delighted to be able to show their commitment to JUSTICE, to show their RIGHTEOUSNESS;

Matthew 21:40-41 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

5. The chief priests and Pharisees use a clever expression,

"He will bring those bad men to a bad end..."

More than that... they know that the owner still intends to get his share of the crop

So, Jesus' own enemies predict what Jesus himself will say:

The vineyard will be taken away from them and given to a people who will produce its fruit

III. The Parable Interpreted

A. The Absentee Landowner

Obviously, the landowner is God... this parable puts some of God's attributes beautifully on display

1. The SOVEREIGNTY of God (specifically, His right to rule and to demand a harvest)
 - a. Central to this parable: there is nothing in the universe that is not His
 - b. He made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them
 - c. Every atom is his... everything that grows is His; every animal is His;
 - d. This parable asserts His right to the vineyard itself and to everything that comes from it
2. The GOODNESS of GOD: God's provision for Israel
 - a. God lavishly provided everything Israel would need for a full, rich harvest
 - b. God gave them promises through the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)
 - c. God gave them Moses, who powerfully led them out of Egypt

- d. God led them through the Red Sea; God gave them manna, bread from heaven to eat day by day in the desert; God gave them water to drink from a rock
 - e. God gave them His word, the Laws of Moses, living oracles from God, written on tablets of stone
 - f. God gave them the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey; He powerfully cleared out their enemies, the Canaanites, from before them
 - g. God protected Israel from all their enemies for generations
 - h. God gave them everything they needed for a full, rich harvest
3. The ABSENCE of God

Matthew 21:33 went away on a journey.

- a. In most of these parables, the owner, King, master is in some sense ABSENT... He is the master who entrusts five talents, and two and one to servants and then goes away for a long time (Matthew 25); He is the owner of a house who entrusts the care of His servants to a steward and then goes away on a journey (Matthew 24); He is the bridegroom who is a long time in coming, and the five wise and five foolish virgins get drowsy and fall asleep (Matthew 25); he is the nobleman who goes away to a distant country to have himself appointed king, then returns (Luke 19)
- b. The key concept is: on Judgment Day, WE WILL BE JUDGED by a VISIBLE GOD based on what we did BY FAITH for an INVISIBLE GOD
- c. Here in this parable, the tenant farmers never see the landlord again... they only deal with His messengers... that is, until the end

Matthew 21:40 when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

“When he COMES...” assumes He is in some sense ABSENT, and needs to COME

- d. The “ABSENCE” of God is from our human perspective only
 - i) The Bible reveals plainly that God is ALWAYS PRESENT everywhere in the universe

Psalm 139:7-10 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far

side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

ii) However, the Bible also reveals that God hides Himself

Isaiah 45:15 Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.

iii) This means God, the King, the owner of all things, does not stand in front of us physically at every moment, demanding to be loved, honored, and obeyed

iv) Thus it was in the Garden of Eden, when Adam was eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he did not see God or hear His voice audibly... only later, Adam heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day and he was afraid and went and hid from the presence of the Lord

v) God is INVISIBLE... effectively ABSENT from our five senses as we make every decision of our lives

vi) This is reflected in all these parables in which the Master, the King, the owner is ABSENT

vii) Thus we must have FAITH... to see the invisible God, to know BY FAITH that God sees everything we do, and that we are accountable to Him

viii) It is precisely for this reason that God sends his word through the prophets... to strengthen the faith of His people, and to remind them of HIS PRESENCE, HIS FUTURE COMING, of JUDGMENT DAY, when His Kingly authority will be obvious

4. The PATIENCE of God

a. The parable reveals an extremely patient landlord, whose patience is actually ASTONISHING

b. Again and again He reaches out to a rebellious people

c. He sends more and more messengers, more and more servants to try to get His harvest from His vineyard

d. Finally, He sends His son

e. This shows God's remarkable patience with Israel

Romans 10:21 concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

B. The Vineyard and its Harvest

1. Could be: the Promised Land

- a. A land flowing with milk and honey; a rich land, filled with the lush blessings of heaven
- b. A land God intended the Jews to cultivate and to bring to full fruition

2. NO... Christ says

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

- a. The vineyard is the "Kingdom of God"
- b. God is not so concerned with the land and its harvests as He is with the hearts of His people
- c. Isaiah tells us

Isaiah 5:7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

- d. BUT MORE THAN JUST ISRAEL: God's eyes are on the whole world!!!

Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

- e. God wanted the nation of Israel to live for the praise of His glory... He wanted the people to bring forth a harvest of righteousness, to make the glory of the God of Israel obvious to the lost of this world
- f. Jeremiah called Israel "the firstfruits of His harvest"... the harvest was the world of human beings, lost sinners who would be reclaimed from their idolatry and brought into the Kingdom of God

Psalm 67:1-7 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah ² that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Selah ⁵ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁶ Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. ⁷ God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.

The rich blessings of God on Israel were meant to be a display of God's rich goodness to the lost Gentiles of the world

That is the FRUIT, that is the HARVEST... RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE, MERCY, LOVINGKINDNESS... the attributes of God, the glory of God, put on full display for all the world to see... so that the GENTILES WOULD PRAISE the TRUE AND LIVING GOD, and give up their wicked idolatries

This is the harvest God wanted to see

C. The Wicked Tenants

1. The people generally

- a. The Jews were sinners like all mankind
- b. They thought the blessings of God were merely for their own pleasure, for their own satisfaction
- c. They had no vision of salvation among the Gentiles, that God's ways might be known on earth, His salvation among all nations
- d. They lived selfish, self-centered lives, and, for the most part, used the richness of the Promised Land to become idolaters... they spent the lavish provision of God on Baal and Molech and other false gods
- e. So the wicked tenants could be the Jews generally

2. The wicked tenants are THE LEADERS SPECIFICALLY

- a. Psalm 118:

"The stone the BUILDERS rejected has become the capstone..."

- b. At the end of this account, the chief priests and Pharisees knew this

Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

- c. The leaders bear the most responsibility for the wickedness of the nation in rejecting God

- d. Isaiah made this plain in Isaiah 3

Isaiah 3:13-14 The LORD takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people. ¹⁴ The LORD enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: "It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses.

- e. So also Jesus will say SEVEN TIMES in Matthew 23

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites

He says they sit in Moses' seat in authority over the people... but he calls them BLIND GUIDES

So, the wicked tenants are the Jewish people generally, and the Jewish leaders specifically

Because they did not live righteous lives in front of the lost and dying world, because they did not treasure the glory of God, they were FRUTTLESS

D. The Messengers

The messengers are definitely the PROPHETS who spoke in the name of the Lord

1. The Purpose of the Prophets

- a. To strengthen our faith, God sends messengers who speak in His name and remind us of His claims over our lives
- b. In the Bible, these messengers, these servants of the King were called PROPHETS
- c. Their primary function was to call the people of God away from sinful selfishness and back to obedience to the laws of the King
- d. This was an IMMENSE privilege... to be able to hear the voice of God in the voice of a man who says "Thus says the Lord..."
- e. BUT Israel generally did NOT cherish these messengers as they should have...

2. Jesus calls Israel to account for their treatment of the prophets

Matthew 23:29-32 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰ And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!"

E. The Son

1. Christ speaks with amazing clarity in this parable of His own identity as the Son of God
2. Jesus was not merely the next in a long line of servants, of messengers from God... he was the INCARNATE SON OF GOD HIMSELF!!!!
3. The people constantly undervalued Him, calling at best merely a prophet

Matthew 21:10-11 *When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" ¹¹ The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

4. Jesus also calmly and clearly predicts His own DEATH... amazing foresight and amazing courage... especially amazing LOVE

Matthew 21:39 *So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

5. This speaks clearly of Jesus' rejection by the leaders of Israel, and by the nation itself

Matthew 21:42 *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

6. Jesus was REJECTED by them... they assessed Him and found Him worthless

Isaiah 53:3 *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

John 1:11 *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

7. Again, note the clarity... Jesus said they "threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him..."

Hebrews 13:11-13 *The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.*

8. Jesus was like so much DUNG, so much refuse, that they rejected!!!

MORE NEXT WEEK

IV. God's Righteous Judgment on His Unfruitful People

A. "Therefore..."

1. God is patient... incredibly so... but His patience does not last forever
2. And His judgment is always JUST... it comes as a direct result of our actions
3. BECAUSE that nation did not produce the fruit of the vineyard, AND because they murdered the prophets, AND because they threw the Son out of the vineyard and killed Him, for all these reasons,

4. JUDGMENT COMES

B. The Judgment Named

1. By the sinners themselves

Matthew 21:41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

2. By Christ

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

C. The Judgment Fulfilled

1. In the Spread of the Gospel, God blessed the advance far more among Gentiles than among Jew

a. At Pisidian Antioch... On Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas preached in the Jewish synagogue... most of the Jews rejected the message and became abusive

b. So Paul announced the judgment of God on the Jews

Acts 13:46-49 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ ¶ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

The same thing happened in Corinth

Acts 18:6 But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

So, the first judgment on the Jews is the overwhelming failure of the Gospel among the Jewish nation, and the overwhelming success of the Gospel among the Gentiles

The second judgment was a little clearer:

2. In 70 AD, the Romans totally destroyed Jerusalem, destroying the Temple and the city, and slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Jews

D. Personal Judgment

But that is merely the national judgment... the judgment on Israel as a whole

What about individuals??

Matthew 21:44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.

Rejection of Christ brings eternal judgment from God

V. The Parable Applied to Us

A. The Vineyard Transferred for a Purpose... to produce the fruit of the Kingdom

B. Do Not Be Arrogant, But Be Afraid... AND FRUITFUL

C. Absentee Landlord

1. APPLICATION #1: intensify your faith to see the absentee King; to know that He is not absent at all, but silently present but audible by faith, invisibly present, but visible by faith... to hear Him better, strengthen your faith; to see Him better, strengthen your faith
2. APPLICATION #2: learn everything you can about judgment day, in which you will show the absentee landowner His harvest
3. APPLICATION #3: learn everything you can about how God defines a good harvest... what is He looking for? What kind of fruit pleases Him?
4. APPLICATION #4: delight in the vineyard; see the richness of God's full provision; know and understand that you are fully equipped to bring about the harvest God will demand; there is nothing lacking from God's provision... you have everything you need for a FULL HARVEST of righteousness
5. APPLICATION #5: marvel at the patience of God in sending so many messengers to the people of God despite their stubbornness; marvel also at God's patience with you, how many messengers He's sent to you in the past to urge you to be fully fruitful in His vineyard
6. APPLICATION #6: make the most of God's patience; ***"God's patience leads you to repentance"*** not to arrogance
7. APPLICATION #7: KEY MOMENT of your life... what you do with the messengers God sends... in the OT it was prophets; in the NT it was apostles; now it is pastor-teachers who speak God's word to you week after week; how do you respond to God's messengers? It might also be a brother or sister in

Christ whom God uses to rebuke you, correct you, change you; even more vital,
HOW DO YOU READ THE SCRIPTURE?

8. APPLICATION #8: Honor and revere the Son God sent... honor him for His courage; Jesus knew full well He would be murdered; see from the parable what a horrible crime the murder of Jesus was; despite the fact that God planned it from before the foundation of the world, the Jews were still accountable
9. APPLICATION #9: Marvel at the depths of God's sovereign plan
10. APPLICATION #10: Understand where we are in Redemptive History; we are the Gentiles, the "people" in the parable who got the vineyard and are now called upon to produce its fruit; the ultimate "harvest" are people who forsake idolatry and through repentance

GOD WANTS US TO BE FRUITFUL

HE WANTS US TO PRODUCE THE HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM

He wants us

Philippians 1:11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.

He wants

Colossians 1:6 gospel [to be] bearing fruit and growing

He wants us

Hebrews 13:15 continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name.

He wants us characterized by the "fruit of the Spirit"

This is the harvest of righteousness God wants in our lives... souls won to Christ here in Durham and to the ends of the earth; praise offered to Christ for dying for us; children born and trained up in righteousness; hearts characterized by the Spirit's fruit

Our "vineyard" is really HIS... our homes, our offices, our church, our neighborhood, our city, our country, our world... this is HIS vineyard, for He planted it

Let's give Him the fruit He deserves